

6/5/23 Monday

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Robert Hanssen, 'Most Damaging Spy' in FBI History, Found Dead in Colorado Prison Cell

Robert Hanssen, an FBI agent who secretly passed intelligence to the Soviet Union and later the Russian Federation, has died at the age of 79. He was serving 15 consecutive life sentences for espionage and conspiracy to commit espionage - charges to which he pleaded guilty in 2002.

The US Bureau of Prisons confirmed reports on Monday that Hanssen had passed away in his cell at ADX Florence, a supermax prison facility in Colorado.

"Responding staff immediately initiated life-saving measures. Staff requested emergency medical services and life-saving efforts continued. The inmate was subsequently pronounced dead by outside emergency personnel," the BoP said in a release.

Hanssen has been called "the most damaging spy in Bureau history" [by the FBI](#). He obtained a job with the FBI in 1976, and three years later approached the Soviet Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) with an offer to spy for them. He passed the Soviets intelligence until 1981, when a transfer affected his ability to do so, and resumed his espionage when he received a new position in 1985.

The double agent repeatedly passed the Soviets complete lists of double agents known to the FBI, including numerous CIA contacts, as well as a variety of other information, such as a secret tunnel the FBI built underneath the Soviet embassy in Washington, DC, to use for spying purposes. He also passed the Soviets signals intelligence information.

Hanssen escaped detection for years in part because he worked in the bureau's section that hunted down double agents, but also because much of his espionage period overlapped with [that of Aldrich Ames](#), a CIA agent who passed the Soviet Union enormous amounts of information, some of which Hanssen also gave them, ignorant of Ames' work. Of all known moles in US intelligence, only Ames has surpassed Hanssen's damage.

In the end, an FBI mole hunt zeroed in on Hanssen because he told the Soviets several things about which Ames could not have known, such as the spy tunnel and an internal FBI probe into another agent who was also working for the Soviets, who then severed connections with the person.

Hanssen continued his work after the collapse of the Soviet Union, approaching the new government of the Russian Federation. Ironically, the Russian embassy reported Hanssen to the FBI because they believed he was a triple agent, but the bureau inexplicably dropped the case. Hanssen was eventually arrested in 2001 during a "dead drop" of intelligence for his Russian handlers, by which time he had been paid some \$600,000 in cash and diamonds, along with two Rolex watches and another \$800,000 he had been promised was deposited in a bank on his family's behalf. It's believed that Russian intelligence never knew Hanssen's true identity and only dealt with him via his code name, Ramon Garcia.

He escaped execution by pleading guilty to 14 counts of espionage and one count of conspiracy to commit espionage, for which he was given 15 consecutive life sentences without the possibility of parole.

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Cornel West Announces Third Party Presidential Bid on People's Party Ticket

Radical Black scholar and Protestant minister Cornel West announced his campaign for the US presidency on Monday. He is running on the People's Party ticket, a third party formed by disaffected left-wing Democrats.

"In these bleak times, I have decided to run for truth and justice, which takes the form of running for President of the United States as a candidate for the People's Party," West said in a video posted to Twitter.

"I enter in the quest for truth, I enter in the quest for justice, and the presidency is just one vehicle to pursue that truth and justice – what I've been trying to do all of my life."

"I come from a tradition where I care about you," West said, listing off a number of issues including a living wage, decent housing, women's bodily autonomy, universal healthcare, and "the escalating destruction of the planet. The destruction of American democracy."

"I know there are precious people in your life who you care for. That's why it's important for you to be involved, important for you to participate. We're not talking about hating anybody, we're talking about loving, we're talking about affirming, we're talking about empowering those who have been pushed to the margins," West continued.

A prominent public intellectual known for his self-described socialist views, [West endorsed](#) US Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), another socialist, when he launched a left-wing challenge to the Democratic mainstream in 2016 and again in 2020. West is known for his strong criticisms of former US President Barack Obama, the nation's first Black leader, who in 2012 he called a "Rockefeller Republican in blackface."

In the video, West said he decided to run on a third party because "neither political party wants to tell the truth about Wall Street, about Ukraine, about the Pentagon, about Big Tech." He called former President Donald Trump a "neo-fascist," and Biden a "milquetoast neoliberal."

Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma and educated at Harvard and Princeton, West has taught at both schools as well as at Yale, and is currently a professor of philosophy at Union Theological Seminary. He is a Baptist minister who marched for Black civil rights in the 1960s and strongly sympathized with the Black Power movement, saying the only reason he didn't join the socialist Black Panther Party was his religious conviction toward nonviolence.

West is running as a member of the People's Party, a third party which was formed in 2017 by a group of former Sanders campaign workers after the Vermont senator was denied the Democratic Party nomination by a strongly pro-Hillary Clinton Democratic National Committee (DNC), which handed the nomination to the former secretary of state instead.

In the summer of 2020, West joined a group of dissident Democrats for [an online "People's Convention"](#) hosted by the People's Party after Joe Biden, a centrist, became the Democratic

nominee for president. Another convention attendee, self-help author [Marianne Williamson](#), has also decided to run for president in 2024, albeit once more in the Democratic primary.

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US 'Synchronized' Taiwan Strait Incident With Shangri-La Dialogue to Pressure Beijing

The US has stepped up its provocative “freedom of navigation” operations in recent years, claiming it is enforcing a treaty, the United Nations Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which Washington itself refuses to ratify. Off the coast of China, these maneuvers have led to several dangerous incidents.

On Sunday, the US and Canada sent a pair of guided-missile destroyers through the Taiwan Strait, a waterway that Beijing regards as internal, and through which it sees the passage of US warships as provocative. The Chinese People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) sent forces to shadow the two warships, including the Type 052 destroyer Suzhou, which crossed in front of the US Navy’s USS Chung-Hoon at a distance of 137 meters in what [Beijing said was a safe and legal maneuver](#), while Washington denounced it as “unsafe” and “coercion.”

Alexei Maslov, director of the Institute of Asian and African Studies at Moscow State University, an expert at the Valdai International Discussion Club, told Sputnik on Monday that the Taiwan Strait incursion was “completely synchronized” with the [Shangri-La Dialogue](#) meeting in Singapore in order to put political and military pressure on China.

“It was impossible to find a worse time for conducting US-Canadian exercises than before the security meeting in Singapore,” he said. “We see that the Americans are not just trying to create a new anti-Chinese coalition, they have been doing this for a long time. They [like to] show their military strength.”

“Their actions at sea are completely synchronized with the meeting in Singapore against the background of the refusal of the Chinese side to conduct at least some negotiations with US Secretary of Defense” Lloyd Austin, Maslov said, noting that despite this, Li is “actively negotiating” with his European counterparts. The Chinese refusal to meet with Austin stems from US sanctions levied against Li for securing the purchase of Russian-made weapons systems.

“Besides, China never received any positive word from the US on Taiwan on the eve of the Shangri-La Dialogue in terms of attempts to improve relations. Therefore, now China has taken an absolutely reasonable position. [China] doesn't talk to the US about military issues when they try to downgrade relations literally on a daily basis.”

“China has shown that it is not only not ready to silently endure pressure, but will respond with sharp attacks. It was no accident that a Chinese ship [interacted with] an American missile destroyer and then a Canadian frigate. If earlier China was limited to statements by the Foreign Ministry, now China is hinting harshly at the possibility of using military force to protect its interests,” he said.

Dr. Qian Yaxu, an expert from the Center for Regional and Country Studies of China Southwestern University of Communications, told Sputnik that "China has the potential to protect its sovereignty and its interests from actions and practices that tread on its red lines." Qian recalled that on Sunday, [Li told attendees](#) at the Shangri-La Dialogue that "a severe conflict or confrontation between China and the US would be an unbearable disaster for the world" and that China "believes that a big power should behave like one, instead of provoking bloc confrontation for self-interest."

"The Chinese Defense Minister reassured neighboring countries. He ruined the US attempts to discredit China, exposed it as a threat to regional security, and showed that China is a peacefully rising great power," Qian said.

"China's position on security issues has always been clear and consistent. It regards countries that promote regional and global security cooperation as its friends. However, China has the potential to protect its sovereignty and interests from actions and practices that violate its 'red lines.'"

"The main priority of Minister Li Shangfu's speech was undoubtedly to clarify his position on the global security situation [and] raising global awareness of the community of a shared future in Asia-Pacific. The Pacific region is a public product proposed by China. China's proposal for a community of a common future in the Asia-Pacific region promotes peaceful development and meets the common interests of the region and all mankind."

"The Taiwan question is undoubtedly the main one for China, and China will resolutely uphold its fundamental national interests in this matter. The United States never understood China's statement about the essence of its position on Taiwan, so China reiterated that the defense of its own sovereignty and the last step in the field of national liberation will definitely be completed."

An island that was for centuries part of China, Taiwan was seized as a colony by the Japanese for several decades before being returned to Beijing's control at the end of World War II. Four years later, the defeated Nationalist forces retreated to Taiwan as the communist Red Army seized control over the mainland and founded a socialist government in Beijing, the People's Republic of China. Taiwan has been self-governed ever since, thanks to [weapons and support](#) funneled to Taipei from Washington, even though the US recognizes Beijing's position that there is one China and that Taiwan is a part of China.

"In Singapore, Chinese Defense Minister Li Shangfu made his first international appearance since his appointment in March. He focused on the three foundations of Chinese diplomacy, on which the correct reaction of the United States and its allies will depend on sustainable security and stability in Asia."

"One of them [is that] China and the US need to resolve differences properly, overcome difficulties and find the right way to get along with each other," Qian explained. "Another is the inadmissibility of undermining the steady trend of increasing stability in the South China Sea. According to the minister, individual non-regional countries under the guise of 'freedom of navigation' impose 'hegemony of navigation'. They want to stir up the South China Sea so they can fish in troubled waters."

"Finally, the minister also noted that the reunification of China is the dominant historical trend and [is an] unstoppable course of events," Qian said, recalling Li's words: "That, how to solve

the Taiwan issue, we, the Chinese, will decide. This issue does not tolerate the intervention of foreign forces."

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GDP Growth in Euro Area Forecast to Slow to 0.4% in 2023, Reach 1.3% in 2024 - World Bank

WASHINGTON, June 6 (Sputnik) – Economic growth in the euro area will decline to 0.4% in 2023 as central banks tighten monetary policy, but GDP growth is expected to recover slightly to 1.3% in 2024, the World Bank said in its latest Global Economic Prospects report on Tuesday. "Growth is forecast to slow to 0.4 percent in 2023, from 3.5 percent in 2022, owing mainly to the lagged effects of monetary policy tightening. The upward revision of 0.4 percentage point to growth this year relative to January mainly reflects the better-than-expected data at the beginning of the year and the downgrade to energy price projections. After bottoming out in 2023, growth is expected to firm to 1.3 percent in 2024, supported by reforms and investments funded by the Recovery and Resilience Facility. The 0.3 percentage point downward revision to the forecast for 2024 partly reflects the effects of tight monetary policy over a longer period than previously expected," the report said.

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US Economy Will Decelerate to 0.8% in 2024 - World Bank

WASHINGTON, June 6 (Sputnik) - The US economic growth is projected to decelerate from 1.1% in 2023 to 0.8% in 2024, the World Bank said on Tuesday. "After growing 1.1 percent in 2023, the U.S. economy is likely to remain weak in 2024, decelerating to 0.8 percent," the World Bank said in its Global Economic Prospects report. The report attributed the weak growth to "the lagged effects of the sharp rise in policy rates over the past year and a half."

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Global Growth Projected to Decelerate From 3.1% in 2022 to 2.1% in 2023 - World Bank

WASHINGTON, June 6 (Sputnik) – Global growth is set to decelerate from 3.1% in 2022 to 2.1% this year, with almost all advanced economies and most of developing countries facing downgrades, the World Bank said on Tuesday. "Global growth is projected to decelerate from 3.1% in 2022 to 2.1% in 2023. In EMDEs

[emerging market and developing economies] other than China, growth is set to slow to 2.9% this year from 4.1% last year. These forecasts reflect broad-based downgrades: growth projections for 70 percent of EMDEs and nearly all advanced economies have been downgraded," the World Bank said in its Global Economic Prospects report.

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US SEC Charges Coinbase With Operating as Unregistered Securities Exchange

WASHINGTON, June 6 (Sputnik) – The US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on Tuesday charged the cryptocurrency trading platform Coinbase with operating as an unregistered securities exchange.

"The Securities and Exchange Commission today charged Coinbase, Inc. with operating its crypto asset trading platform as an unregistered national securities exchange, broker, and clearing agency. The SEC also charged Coinbase for failing to register the offer and sale of its crypto asset staking-as-a-service program," the SEC said in a statement.

The complaint filed by the SEC says that Coinbase has made billions of dollars by unlawfully facilitating the buying and selling of crypto asset securities at least since 2019.

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RPT: PREVIEW - Blinken Heads to Saudi Arabia for Gulf Cooperation Council, Anti-IS Coalition Talks

WASHINGTON, June 6 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken departs on Tuesday for a trip to Saudi Arabia, where he will travel from June 6-8 for meetings with Saudi officials, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Global Coalition to Defeat the Islamic State terror group (banned in Russia).

Blinken and Saudi officials will discuss cooperation on a range of bilateral, regional and global issues, according to the State Department. The top diplomat is expected to discuss both economic and security cooperation, the State Department said.

Moreover, the United States has a "real national security interest" in normalizing ties between Israel and Saudi Arabia, Blinken told the American Israel Public Affairs Committee Policy (AIPAC) summit on Monday.

The US is committed to working towards normalized relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, including on the upcoming trip, Blinken said.

The US remains engaged in the Middle East so as not to leave a vacuum for strategic competitors to fill, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Arabian Peninsula Affairs Daniel Benaim said on Friday.

The trip comes amid purported tensions in the US-Saudi relationship, stemming from US

President Biden's decision to release a CIA report alleging Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's culpability in the death of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Some analysts have speculated that Blinken's trip to Saudi Arabia may be a bid to mend ties between Washington and Riyadh.

GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

Blinken will participate in a US-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) ministerial meeting on June 7, the State Department said. GCC members include Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Blinken will discuss growing cooperation between the US and GCC partners on security, stability, de-escalation, regional integration and economic opportunities across the Middle East.

In April, members of the GCC held a meeting alongside officials from Iraq, Jordan and Egypt to discuss the potential return of Syria to the League of Arab States (LAS). The countries issued a joint statement following the meeting, in which they called for unity in Syria and its return to the "Arab bosom."

However, the US does not believe Syria deserves readmittance to the LAS at this time, State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel said, adding that the US will not normalize relations with the Syrian government absent "authentic progress" towards a resolution of the conflict in the country.

ANTI-IS COALITION

On June 8, Blinken will co-host a ministerial meeting of the Global Anti-IS Coalition, which includes 85 partner countries and organizations. Blinken will highlight the coalition's critical role in addressing the continuing threat of terrorism in the region, the State Department said.

Delegations from several non-member Central Asian countries will also attend the coalition meeting, US Deputy Special Envoy to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS Ian McCary said on Friday.

The coalition intends to welcome a new member into the coalition during the meeting as well, McCary added.

Meeting participants will discuss the situation in Afghanistan, including growing cooperation between the coalition and Central Asian states to address mounting challenges posed by IS in the region following the Taliban's takeover of the country, McCary said.

The meeting will also focus on challenges posed by the Islamic State and other terrorist groups in Africa, where several groups have adopted similar extremist views and increasingly terrorize their populations, McCary said.

Blinken will announce a new financial aid package designed to support stabilization efforts in Iraq and Syria as well, Benaim said. The coalition's mission in Syria and Iraq has changed in nature since the end of the military campaign against IS, with a new focus on addressing humanitarian challenges in the region, McCary said.

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Americans Might Understand Pushkin More Easily Than Byron - US Poet

WASHINGTON, June 6 (Sputnik) - Americans might more easily understand "Eugene Onegin," the masterpiece of renowned Russian poet Alexander Pushkin, than Lord Byron's Don Juan, US translator of Pushkin's works and poet Julian Henry Lowenfeld told Sputnik.

On June 6, Pushkin's birthday, Russia and the United Nations annually observe Russian Language Day.

"I think on a human level, Pushkin is warmer, easier in some way than Byron. Pushkin actually is very conversational," Lowenfeld said when asked if it would be easy for Americans to read "Eugene Onegin."

Lowenfeld has just completed his translation of the masterpiece that Pushkin began writing 200 years ago.

"By chance, Pushkin began writing 'Onegin' on May 9, 1823. And I chanced to finish translating it on May 9, 2023. Curious little way to celebrate the bicentennial," he said.

Lowenfeld noted that nowadays, the novel is universally acknowledged to be the crown jewel of Russian literature, but during his lifetime, Pushkin was twice exiled and experienced problems with censorship.

Some of the chapters published serially received terrible reviews from critics, Lowenfeld said.

"Some people at the time were just not ready for it," he said. "Now, all recognize him as a genius, but during his lifetime, the poet sometimes got 'misunderstandings, noise and blame.'"

At the same time, many obvious things then will now be difficult for a modern reader to understand without comments and notes. For example, the use of the term "bolivar," referring to a hat named after the South American revolutionary leader Simon Bolivar.

Lowenfeld said that by wearing such a hat, Onegin, and thereby Pushkin, is sending a message: down with the monarchists, down with the Tsar.

"The readers of the time understood that but we would not," he said.

Lowenfeld emphasized that "Eugene Onegin" is the "greatest work of the greatest poet in the Russian language, but for all of its surpassing beauty, it is quite an indictment of Russian society."

"When you do not follow your heart and instead do as others do, you end up quite unhappy. This novel is about love and freedom, which are always the key themes of Pushkin," he said.

Lowenfeld also said, while acknowledging some doubt, that Pushkin could become a cultural bridge between Russians and Americans.

"Pushkin had a Jeffersonian belief in human dignity and freedom; he wrote odes to liberty. It's no accident that whenever people try to organize some sort of democratic protest in Russia, they usually go to Pushkin Square in Moscow to express their views near his monument," he said.

"Pushkin was for love and freedom: absolutely universal human values," Lowenfeld added.

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US Awards Raytheon's Pratt & Whitney \$2Bln for F-35 Engine Support - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 6 (Sputnik) - Raytheon subsidiary Pratt and Whitney received a contract worth more than \$2 billion for additional components and support for the F-35 fighter jet's propulsion system, the Defense Department said in a press release.

"Raytheon Technologies Corp., doing business as Pratt and Whitney Military Engines, East Hartford, Connecticut, is awarded a \$2,023,073,136... contract," the release said on Monday. "This modification exercises options to procure materials, parts, and components for Lot 17 of the F135 Propulsion system for F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter aircraft as well as global spares requirements to include spare engines, power modules, and other hardware."

The expanded contract provides Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy, non-Defense Department participants and Foreign Military Sales (FMS) customers, the release added.

Work on the project will be performed at different locations across the continental United States and in other locations outside the country over the next two and a half years and is expected to be completed in December 2025, the Defense Department said.

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Conservatives to Block Federal Budget Unless Trudeau's Meets Their Key Demands - Poilievre

WASHINGTON, June 6 (Sputnik) - Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre said his party would block the 2023 federal budget unless Prime Minister Justin Trudeau present a plan for its balance and commits to not increasing the carbon tax.

"Today we're here to talk about our two demands to reverse the inflationary crisis Justin Trudeau has caused, two demands that we will fight for including by putting forward 900 amendments to the forthcoming liberal budget debate. We are going to stop the budget unless they meet two conditions," Poilievre said in a press conference on Monday

The first condition set forth by the conservative party, is to demand that Trudeau's Liberal government tables a plan to balance the budget and bring down inflation and interests' rates.

Secondly, as the government reportedly plans on increasing the carbon tax on fossil fuels to C\$0.61 (\$0.45), Poilievre is requesting from Trudeau that he holds upon a promise he had previously made, about not increasing the tax above C\$0.14.

Poilievre said that Canadians cannot allow themselves to pay an additional 47% in carbon taxes who in turn will increase the prices of groceries and heating.

The official leader of the opposition added that his party would fight until those two demands are met by Trudeau, further pledging to use all available procedural tools, including 900 amendments and long speeches, to block the budget from passing.

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NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab Fixed Staffing Failures Delaying Asteroid Mission

WASHINGTON, June 6 (Sputnik) - NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, California has done an "outstanding" job in correcting the staffing shortages and problems that imposed years of delay on its Psyche mission to a nickel-iron asteroid orbiting between Mars and Jupiter, US space agency officials said in a press release.

"Steps taken by NASA, the agency's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Southern California, and Caltech, to put the Psyche mission on track for an October 2023 launch have been outstanding, according to an independently appointed review board. NASA and JPL convened the board last summer after the Psyche mission team requested to delay the spacecraft's August 2022 launch to a metal-rich asteroid of the same name," the release said on Monday.

The Independent Review Board (IRB) led by retired aerospace executive A. Thomas Young concluded in its initial report that JPL workforce issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the launch delay but other problems including insufficient staffing and lack of experience among those working on the project, along with failures in management communication and oversight made the delays worse, NASA said.

"In response to the review board's recommendations, JPL moved to directly address the concerns regarding the Psyche project as well as the laboratory as an institution. The Psyche mission added experienced team members, reorganized a large part of its workforce, and adopted comprehensive metrics to monitor progress toward launch and operational readiness," the release said.

The report also noted improvements to senior management's oversight of the mission, NASA said.

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Danish PM on Zuppi Visits to Russia, Ukraine: World Interested in Peace

WASHINGTON, June 6 (Sputnik) - Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen on Monday commenting on the scheduled visits to Russia and Ukraine by President of the Italian Episcopal Conference Cardinal Matteo Zuppi said that the international community is interested in peace but still needs a signal from Moscow.

When asked about the Italian Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, tasked by Pope Francis to carry out a peace mission to end the conflict in Ukraine, Frederiksen said, as quoted by the White House pool reporter, "I think all of us are very interested in peace."

"It takes two to tango," Frederiksen added. "We still need a signal from Russia."

Earlier on Monday, Leonid Sevastyanov, the leader of a Russian sect who communicates regularly with Pope Francis, told Sputnik that Zuppi, who will travel to Ukraine later in the day, would also pay a visit to Russia after returning to the Vatican from Kiev and formulating an agenda. Zuppi may hold meetings with Putin, he added.

In May, Pope Francis entrusted Cardinal Matteo Zuppi with the task of leading a mission to help ease tensions in Ukraine and "initiate two paths of peace." Vatican Secretary of State Pietro Parolin said that Zuppi's mission would first have to try to create an environment conducive to peace.

According to the Holy See, the cardinal is scheduled to pay a visit to the Ukrainian capital on Monday and Tuesday as a papal envoy to discuss the matter.

Moscow has repeatedly said it is open to peace talks as long as its conditions are met, such as recognition of Russia's territory gains. Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy ruled that engaging in such negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin is impossible and maintains that the territorial integrity of Ukraine should be respected.

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Ex-US Intel Official Alleges UAP Disclosures Illegally Withheld From Congress - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 6 (Sputnik) - Former US National Reconnaissance Office representative to the government's unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP) task force David Grusch filed a complaint alleging that disclosures on the recovery of non-human objects were illegally withheld from Congress, The Debrief reported on Monday.

Grusch, who also served as the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency co-lead for UAP analysis, claims to have suffered illegal retaliation for attempting to make the confidential disclosures to lawmakers, the report said, citing the former intelligence official.

Other active and retired intelligence officials with knowledge of UAP programs also independently provided corroborating information and vouched for Grusch's credibility, the report said. The Pentagon cleared Grusch's statements for release to the public earlier this year, according to the report.

Grusch provided Congress and the Intelligence Community Inspector General with classified information regarding retrieval of intact and partially intact craft of non-human origin, the report said.

Grusch asserts that government UAP programs have been concealed by multiple agencies

without appropriate oversight, the report said. Grusch began providing Congress with information on the programs in 2022, the report said.

Grusch informed lawmakers about a decades-long, ongoing competition with adversaries to identify UAP crashes and landings with the intent to retrieve material for exploitation, the report said.

In May 2022, attorneys representing Grusch filed a complaint alleging that UAP-related information has been withheld from Congress in an effort to avoid oversight, the report said, citing an unclassified version of the complaint.

The complaint also alleges that Grusch suffered months of retaliations related to disclosures he made on the matter to the Defense Department Inspector General in July 2021, the report said. The Intelligence Community Inspector General found his complaint credible in July 2022, sparking a whistleblower reprisal probe, the report said.

Grusch served as an intelligence officer for more than 14 years, leaving government service in April 2023 in order to further pursue government accountability through public awareness, the report said.

Last week, NASA's UAP research team reiterated its position that there is no evidence linking UAP to extraterrestrial life.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, June 6 (Sputnik) –

WESTERN MILITARY SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

* United States' billions of dollars in military aid for Ukraine has put a strain on the country's defense industrial base, US Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl said on Monday.

* The Biden administration is working with Congress to send an additional \$37 million in cyber aid to Ukraine following another round of the US-Ukraine Cyber Dialogue that took place in Tallinn, Estonia earlier this month, the US State Department said.

* The United States and its allies do not have many Patriot air defense systems in their inventory, but air defense remains a top priority for Ukraine, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* Some 100 people remain in the Novaya Tavorzhanka rural locality in Russia's Belgorod region that is being shelled by Ukrainian forces but it is impossible to enter the area and verify this data, the region's governor, Vyacheslav Gladkov, said on Monday.

* The Ukrainian military has failed to break Russian defense lines in the South Donetsk direction and were pushed back to their initial positions on Monday morning, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

* Russia is ready to consider Indonesia's plan for settlement in Ukraine if Jakarta officially sends it to Moscow, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko said.

* Russian armed forces and border guards have thwarted a new attempt by Ukrainian military

to penetrate the Belgorod region, Russian Defense Ministry said.

WESTERN SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA

* The United States is targeting seven people and one entity with new Russia-related sanctions, the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) said on Monday.

* The European Union imposed sanctions against nine Russian nationals under the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime in relation to the case of Russian opposition activist Vladimir Kara-Murza (recognized as a foreign agent in Russia).

BLACK SEA GRAIN DEAL

* The next round of consultations on Russia-UN Memorandum within the grain deal framework will be held on June 9 in Geneva, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin said on Monday.

* Vessel inspections as part of the grain deal have been resumed, Vershinin said.

* The United Nations continues "constant discussions" with its partners, including Russia and Ukraine, over the Black Sea Grain Deal, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said.

GLOBAL ENERGY MARKETS

* Russia will fulfill the general agreements existing within the framework of OPEC+, as this format is very important for ensuring stability of international energy markets, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday.

* The amount of lost oil and gas revenues of Russia's budget is expected to be 44 billion rubles (\$542 million) in June, the Russian Finance Ministry said.

* Companies should be allowed LNG exports without being bound to licenses for gas field development, Russian energy company Novatek CEO Leonid Mikhelson said.

* The United States did not get any notification prior to Riyadh's announcement on its oil production cut, but there would be no need for that as it is a move by a sovereign country, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said.

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Robert Kennedy Calls For Peace With Russia, China as Part of His Presidential Campaign

NEW YORK, June 6 (Sputnik) - Democratic candidate for US President Robert Kennedy Jr. said on Monday that he wants to have peace with Russia and China and focus on competing on the economic platform.

"Let's have peace with Russia. Let's have peace with China. And let's all enjoy the prosperity of healthy economic competition," Kennedy said.

The Chinese do not want to have war with the US, they just want to provide better living standards for their people, he added. Kennedy also believes that the Ukrainian crisis is a proxy war.

The Democratic candidate for president spoke on Twitter, after being invited by Elon Musk. Elon Musk has started hosting US presidential candidates on his Twitter spaces to promote free speech. A week ago, the entrepreneur hosted Republican presidential candidate Ron DeSantis, who announced his bid on Twitter and collected \$8.2 million - a record amount of contributions

for his campaign.

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US Should End Bioweapons Programs in Ukraine, Convene Countries to Address Issue - RFK Jr.

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - The United States ought to cease its biological weapons programs in countries around the world including Ukraine, as well as convene other nations to address existential threats emerging from artificial intelligence (AI) and bioweapons, Democratic US presidential candidate for 2024 Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said on Monday.

"If we are not able to negotiate with our adversaries on issues like that [AI], there are now existential threats, and it's not just AI, it's this bioweapons development" Kennedy said during a Twitter Spaces event with Elon Musk. "We have these labs now all over the world, in Ukraine, etc., that are developing all kinds of hideous bioweapons."

The US should shut down the development of bioweapons around the world and work to verify their eradication, Kennedy said.

Countries including Iran, Israel, Russia, China and the US should gather to discuss existential threats such as AI and bioweapons, Kennedy said, adding that one country alone cannot regulate such issues.

Last month, the head of Russia's radiation, chemical and biological defense forces, Lt. Gen. Igor Kirillov, said that the Russian Defense Ministry obtained data proving the US developed biological weapons in Ukraine.

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Progressive Scholar Cornel West Joins US Presidential Race as People's Party Candidate

WASHINGTON, June 6 (Sputnik) - US progressive activist, scholar and philosopher Cornell West said he is joining the 2024 presidential race as a People's Party candidate, on a platform that includes disbanding NATO and ending all foreign military aid.

"I am running for truth and justice as a presidential candidate for the People's Party to reintroduce America to the best of itself - fighting to end poverty, mass incarceration, ending wars and ecological collapse, guaranteeing housing, health care, education and living wages for all!" West said in a tweet.

In a video clip accompanying the post, the candidate for the People's Party, which was founded by a former Bernie Sanders campaign aide, said Democrats and Republicans have failed to tell Americans what is really going on with respect to the financial elite and US wars overseas.

"We're talking about affirming, we're talking about empowering those who have been pushed to the margins because neither political party wants to tell the truth, about Wall Street, about

Ukraine, about the Pentagon, about Big Tech," West said.

In a clip with Bill Maher included in the video, the Black scholar called Democrats and Republicans "gangsters," described President Donald Trump as a neo-fascist, and painted President Joe Biden as a "milquetoast neoliberal."

According to his campaign site, in terms of foreign policy, West if elected will seek to disband NATO, end American wars overseas, stop all US foreign military aid, and ban nuclear weapons globally.

West has called for a ban on corporate lobbying and wants to end dark money in politics. In addition, West supports term limits and vowed to forgive all student debt.

West resigned from Harvard University in 2021 after accusing the university of not granting him tenure because of his vocal support of the Palestinian cause.

West has taught at Harvard, Princeton and Yale universities and is now a professor of philosophy at Union Theological Seminary.

West embraces African-American philosophy along with a postmodern version of pragmatism, one of the few philosophical traditions considered genuinely indigenous to the United States.

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US to Keep Communication Open With China to Address 'Unacceptable' Intercepts - Kirby

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - The United States will continue to keep open lines of communication with China to address unacceptable military intercepts between the two countries, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Monday.

On Saturday, the US Indo-Pacific Command (PACOM) said the Chinese military ship PRC LY 132 came within 150 yards of the USS Chung-Hoon destroyer during a joint Canada-US exercise in the Taiwan Strait, when the ships crossed the strait.

"This is just part again of a growing aggressiveness by the PRC [People's Republic of China] that we're dealing with and we're prepared to address it....we're going to continue to keep the lines open with the Chinese to make it clear how unacceptable those particular intercepts are," Kirby said during a press briefing.

In late May, PACOM said a Chinese J-16 fighter jet performed an "unnecessarily aggressive maneuver" while intercepting a US Air Force RC-135 aircraft over the South China Sea.

Tensions over Taiwan significantly increased last August after then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi traveled to Taipei despite Beijing's warnings against such a visit. China condemned Pelosi's trip, which it regarded as a gesture of support for separatism, and launched large-scale military exercises in the vicinity of the island.

Taiwan has been governed independently from mainland China since 1949. Beijing views the island as its province, while Taiwan maintains it is an autonomous country but stops short of declaring independence. Beijing opposes any official contacts of foreign states with Taipei and considers Chinese sovereignty over the island indisputable.

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Six F-16s Were Put Up In Air For Cessna Aircraft , Biden Briefed on Incident - Kirby

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - Six F-16s were put up in the air for the Cessna Citation aircraft on Sunday afternoon, while the President was briefed and kept informed, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Monday.

"Six F-16s from three different air bases on the East Coast, certainly, Joint Base Andrews was one of those three launched into the air six F-16s... to intercept this particular Cessna Citation," Kirby said. "At the appropriate time the President was briefed and kept informed."

The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) confirmed on Monday that four people were killed in the Cessna Citation aircraft crash over Washington this weekend, an accident that caused a security scare due to a sonic boom generated by an F-16 intercept.

In its accident and incident notification report, the FAA said there are four fatalities, including one crew member.

The aircraft crashed under unknown circumstances in Waynesboro, Virginia, the report added. On Sunday, the FAA told Sputnik after multiple media reports of loud explosion-like sounds in Washington that a Cessna Citation aircraft crashed in Virginia. The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) explained that a sonic boom in the Washington DC area and its surroundings was caused by a F-16 fighter jet that intercepted the unresponsive Cessna 560 Citation V aircraft over Washington before the latter crashed.

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Robert Hanssen, Former FBI Agent Convicted of Spying for Russia, Dies in Prison – BOP

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) – Former FBI agent Robert Hanssen, who was sentenced to life for spying for Russia, died in prison, the US Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) said on Monday.

"On Monday, June 5, 2023, at approximately 6:55 am, inmate Robert Hanssen was found unresponsive at the United States Penitentiary (USP) Florence ADMAX in Florence, Colorado. Responding staff immediately initiated life-saving measures. Staff requested emergency medical services (EMS) and life-saving efforts continued. Mr. Hanssen was subsequently pronounced deceased by EMS personnel," the statement said.

Hanssen died at the age of 79. He had been in custody in a maximum security prison in Colorado since 2002.

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US Received No Advance Notice on Saudi Oil Cut, Nor Would There Need to Be - Kirby

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - The United States did not get any notification prior to Riyadh's announcement on its oil production cut, but there would be no need for that as it is a move by a sovereign country, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Monday.

"I know of no advance notice, nor would there need to be. I mean ... you know, that was a unilateral decision by a sovereign state. So I'll let them speak to that," Kirby said at a press briefing.

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US, Allies Don't Have Many Patriots in Stock, Air Defense Top Priority for Kiev - Kirby

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - The United States and its allies do not have many Patriot air defense systems in their inventory, but air defense remains a top priority for Ukraine, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Monday.

"I can assure you that air defense remains top of the list of the kinds of capabilities that we're going to continue to make sure Ukraine has," Kirby said when asked if the United States is considering sending more Patriot systems to Ukraine. "There's not a lot of them, either in our inventory or the inventory of nations that have purchased them, but again, I don't want to get ahead of where we are. We know air defense is a priority."

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US House Panel Head Says Blinken Allowing Members Chance to See Afghanistan Dissent Cable

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State will allow members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee to view a dissent cable from State Department employees regarding the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and subsequent takeover by the Taliban, Committee Chairman Michael McCaul's office said on Monday.

"House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul has secured an agreement with Secretary Blinken that would allow all Members of the committee a reasonable opportunity to view the dissent channel cable and the response. In response, Chairman McCaul has agreed this would be a satisfactory accommodation to the subpoena and would take contempt off the table," McCaul's office said in a statement.

In March, the panel issued a subpoena to produce the July 2021 dissent channel cable, which purportedly warned of the risk of the Taliban's rapid takeover of Afghanistan in the wake of the US withdrawal.

McCaul threatened to hold Blinken in contempt of Congress if he did not provide lawmakers access to the document.

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Russia Already Abides by Grossi's 5 Principles to Protect Zaporizhzhia NPP - Nebenzia

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - Russia is already complying with the five principles proposed by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi to protect the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant and sees no need for any UN Security Council resolution on the issue, Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Monday.

"We are already fulfilling the five points that Rafael Grossi announced; we do not need any resolutions or statements for this," Nebenzia told reporters.

The problem is that "everyone is bashfully silent" about where the shelling of the plant comes from, the ambassador continued.

Nebenzia said that the IAEA staff at the Zaporizhzhia NPP "understand that the shelling of the plant comes from outside, from the Ukrainian side."

"The IAEA chief says that the IAEA does not have attributive functions and therefore it cannot determine where the shooting comes from. But ... now with the approval of these five principles to ensure the safety of the Zaporizhzhia NPP, we certainly expect that such attribution will be done," Nebenzia said.

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Jobs at Risk From Artificial Intelligence, Need Human Intelligence Tempering - IMF Dep. MD

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - Serious disruptions could be underway in the jobs market from an explosion in artificial intelligence, and human intelligence needs to intervene and temper this to balance technology needs with that of society, International Monetary Fund Deputy Managing Director Gita Gopinath said Monday.

"It is by no means guaranteed that AI will benefit humans, or that the gains of the winners will be sufficient to compensate the losers," Gopinath said in a speech at an event to celebrate industrial innovation. "It's quite possible that AI might simply replace human jobs without creating new, more productive work for humans to move into. As we confront the power and perils of the artificial hand, we need to summon every ounce of our empathy and ingenuity—the very things that make human intelligence so special."

Gopinath said AI could affect occupations and industries differently than previous waves of automation.

"Recent empirical studies suggest AI could reduce job-market polarization, by putting downward pressure on wages of high-paying jobs," she said. "Some studies suggest that AI

adoption could flatten the hierarchical structures of firms, increasing the number of workers in junior positions and decreasing the number in middle management and senior roles. The number of jobs affected could be sweeping—some researchers estimate that two-thirds of U.S. occupations could be vulnerable to some form of automation.”

Gopinathb said sound, smart regulations that ensure AI is harnessed for the benefit of society are thus required. “One of the challenges is the extent to which humans may come to depend on the judgment of AI systems. They rely on existing data, and hence may replicate the embedded bias in that data. Some models have shown a tendency to confidently defend false information—a phenomenon known as AI ‘hallucination.’ If we cede control to AI in areas such as medicine and critical infrastructure, the risks could be severe and even existential.”

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US House Panel to Launch Contempt Hearings Against FBI Chief Over Biden Probe Doc - Chair

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - The US House Oversight Committee will initiate contempt of Congress hearings against FBI Director Christopher Wray later this week after the agency failed to comply with a subpoena requesting information on a potential bribery scheme involving President Joe Biden, Chairman James Comer said on Monday.

"At the briefing, the FBI again refused to hand over the unclassified record to the custody of the House Oversight Committee - and we will now initiate contempt of Congress hearings this Thursday," Comer said during a press conference.

In May, Comer subpoenaed Wray and requested a document that allegedly contains information about a potential scheme involving then-Vice President Joe Biden and a foreign national exchanging money to secure policy decisions.

Last week, Comer threatened to hold Wray in contempt of Congress if the chief law enforcement official failed to comply with the subpoena.

The FBI record has "not been disproven" and is currently being used in an ongoing investigation, Comer said. The confidential human source behind the information is a "trusted, highly credible" informant engaged with the FBI for over a decade, Comer added.

Democratic Congressman Jamie Raskin, who also attended the FBI briefing on Monday, said that he had not heard about the document's links to an ongoing probe, adding that he "must've missed" that part.

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State Dept. in Light of Further OPEC+ Cuts Says Believes Supply Should Meet Demand

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - The United States believes supply should meet demand and will work with all oil producers to ensure energy markets support economic growth, US State Department Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Monday.

On Sunday, OPEC+ agreed to extend the oil deal through 2024, as well as reduce the alliance's total output level by 1.4 million barrels per day starting next year.

"We believe that supply should meet demand and we'll continue to work with all producers and consumers to ensure that energy markets support economic growth and lower prices for American families," Patel said during a press briefing when asked about the OPEC+ decision on further production cuts.

Saudi Arabia, Russia and several other oil producers from the 10-nation OPEC and its non-member partners announced in April that they would voluntarily take a total 1.16 million barrels of crude oil per day off the market from May-December 2023 in a bid to prop up prices.

OPEC+ will adjust their cumulative production to 40.46 million barrels per day over January-December 2024. Russia said it would extend its voluntary production cut of 500,000 barrels per day until the end of 2024, while Saudi Arabia said it would make an extra 1 million cut to its daily production from July, on top of a 500,000 cut that was likewise extended through December 2024.

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US Ready to Engage With Russia, China on Arms Control - State Department

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - The United States is ready to engage with Russia and China on arms control in both bilateral and multilateral formats, State Department Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Monday.

"The United States is ready to engage with Russia and China on the implementation of existing agreements on how to advance arms control and risk reduction both bilaterally and in appropriate multilateral fora," Patel said during a press briefing.

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FAA Confirms 4 Killed in Cessna Crash That Shocked Washington With Sonic Boom

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) confirmed on Monday that four people were killed in the Cessna Citation aircraft crash over Washington this weekend, an accident that caused a security scare due to a sonic boom generated by an F-16 intercept.

In its accident and incident notification report, the FAA said there are four fatalities, including one crew member.

The aircraft crashed under unknown circumstances in Waynesboro, Virginia, the report added.

On Sunday, the FAA told Sputnik after multiple media reports of loud explosion-like sounds in Washington that a Cessna Citation aircraft crashed in Virginia. The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) explained that a sonic boom in the Washington DC area and its surroundings was caused by a F-16 fighter jet that intercepted the unresponsive Cessna 560 Citation V aircraft over Washington before the latter crashed.

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UPDATE - Crypto Exchange Binance, Founder Charged With Illegal Routing of Customer Funds - SEC

(Adds reaction from Binance in paras 6-8)

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - The US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) said on Monday it has filed 13 charges against Binance, operator of the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange, and its co-founder Changpeng Zhao, for alleged commingling of user funds diverted to an European firm controlled by Zhao.

"Through thirteen charges, we allege that Zhao and Binance entities engaged in an extensive web of deception, conflicts of interest, lack of disclosure, and calculated evasion of the law," SEC Chair Gary Gensler said in a statement. "The complaint further alleges that the strategic and targeted wash trading largely perpetrated by the Binance US platform's primary undisclosed 'market making' trading firm Sigma Chain, also owned by Zhao, demonstrates the falsity of statements ... made about its market surveillance and controls."

Expounding details of the case, the SEC, which acts as the US stock market's regulator, said Zhao and Binance worked to subvert "their own controls" to allow high-net worth US investors and customers to continue trading on Binance's unregulated international exchange.

"They attempted to evade US securities laws by announcing sham controls that they disregarded behind the scenes so that they could keep high-value US customers on their platforms," the regulator said. "The public should beware of investing any of their hard-earned assets with or on these unlawful platforms."

Zhao, who lives in Dubai, dismissed the SEC's charges on Twitter by saying "4," a popular refrain in Binance's community urging users to ignore fear, uncertainty, and doubt, or "FUD."

Binance, in a statement also circulated on Twitter, described the SEC's lawsuit as "baseless" and "unjustified by the facts, by the law, or by the Commission's own precedent." The crypto exchange operator added that it intends "to defend ourselves vigorously".

It accused the SEC of seeking a "near eradication" of the crypto industry with similar action against other names in the business such as Coinbase, Gemini, and Kraken.

Binance called on the US Congress to intervene with bipartisan legislation to create a workable regulatory regime for digital assets and rein in what it called bureaucratic overreach, without which "our country's role as a leader and innovator will continue to be undermined."

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with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trial Setting Hearing for Russian Businessman Vinnik Set on Friday - Court Document

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - A hearing to consider a trial date for Russian businessman Alexander Vinnik's case will take place on Friday, court documents revealed on Monday.

The US government accuses Vinnik of enabling criminal activity through BTC-e by obscuring and anonymizing transactions and sources of funds. Vinnik denies the charges against him.

"The above-captioned matter is currently set for a motions hearing and trial setting conference on June 9, 2023," the court document said.

Vinnik's attorney David Rizk recently told Sputnik he expects Vinnik's trial date to be set in the fall.

Rizk also said Vinnik would like to be considered for a potential US-Russia prisoner exchange deal in the future.

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UNGA To Elect Non-Permanent Members of Security Council - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, June 5 (Sputnik) - UN General Assembly will elect five non-permanent members of the Security Council on June 6, spokesperson Paulina Kubiak said on Monday.

"There are six members up [and] five available seats. Those are Algeria, Belarus, Guyana, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, and Slovenia," Kubiak told reporters.

The election will start at 10:00 a.m. EST (1:00 p.m. GMT), she added.

Kubiak also noted that winners have to get a two-thirds majority of those present and voting.

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Kritenbrink Holds 'Productive' Talks With Chinese Counterparts in Beijing - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink held "candid and productive" talks with Chinese counterparts during his trip to Beijing, the State Department said on Monday.

Kritenbrink and National Security Council Senior Director for China and Taiwan Affairs Sarah Beran met with Chinese Executive Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu and Director General of the North American and Oceanian Affairs Department Yang Tao.

"The two sides had candid and productive discussions as part of ongoing efforts to maintain open lines of communication and build on recent high-level diplomacy between the two countries," the State Department said in a press release.

They also discussed cross-Straits issues, channels of communication, and views on the bilateral

relationship, the release added.

On Friday, the Financial Times reported that CIA Director William Burns made a secret visit to Beijing last month in an attempt to repair US-China ties, signaling the Biden administration's interest in stabilizing bilateral relations.

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UN Keeps Constant Discussions With Partners on Grain Deal - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, June 5 (Sputnik) - The United Nations continues "constant discussions" with its partners, including Russia and Ukraine, over the Black Sea Grain Deal, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

"The discussions are going on, we keep constant discussions with our partners within the framework of the JCC [Joint Coordination Center], including the Russian Federation and Ukraine," Dujarric told reporters when asked to comment on the statement of Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin that Moscow sees no prospects for extending the grain deal.

Dujarric pointed out that the grain initiative is critical to address a world food crisis and hunger. He also underscored the importance of the memorandum of understanding the UN signed with Russia on fertilizers.

The grain deal was brokered by the United Nations and Turkey in July 2022 to facilitate the export of Ukrainian agricultural products from Black Sea ports amid the military operation launched by Russia in Ukraine in February that year. The package agreement also includes a memorandum of understanding between Russia and the United Nations to unblock Russian grain and fertilizer exports via the Black Sea, which, according to Moscow, has not been implemented due to Western sanctions.

In mid-May, the grain deal was extended until July 17 without any changes. The Russian Foreign Ministry has warned that if the problematic issues with the deal, including Moscow's demand to reconnect the Russian Agricultural Bank to the SWIFT system and relaunch the Togliatti-Odesa ammonia pipeline, are not addressed within two months, the deal will be terminated after July 17.

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New System Integrates Baltic States Air Defenses With US, NATO Forces - Northrop

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - Northrop Grumman has deployed its new Forward Area Air Defense Command and Control (FAAD C2) system in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, creating air and missile defense interoperability between the Baltic states, NATO and US forces, the company announced on Monday.

"Northrop Grumman Corporation's FAAD C2 system was successfully fielded in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, creating air and missile defense interoperability amongst the Baltic states, NATO and US forces," the company said in a press release.

FAAD C2 provides command and control for the three small Baltic nations' collective short range air defense (SHORAD) systems to conduct counter unmanned aerial systems (C-UAS) and SHORAD missions, the release explained.

"Northrop Grumman modernized the Baltics' air defense and C-UAS capabilities in alignment with the US European Command's Integrated Air and Missile Defense Plan," the release said.

The company conducted FAAD C2 training with the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian armies in the Baltic region to help them integrate with modern NATO air defenses, it added.

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Ukrainian Soldiers' Use of Nazi Symbols Risks Undermining Foreign Support - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - The use of Nazi symbols by Ukrainian forces risks undermining foreign support for the regime in Kiev, as the behavior supports Russian claims that the special military operation is intended to "de-nazify" Ukraine, The New York Times reported on Monday.

On several occasions, NATO and Ukrainian government social media accounts have shared, and later deleted, photographs showing Ukrainian troops with Nazi and other far-right symbols, the report said.

Symbols donned by some forces in Ukraine include the skull-and-crossbones patch of the Nazi Totenkopf and the so-called "black sun" associated with Nazi SS chief Heinrich Himmler and various neo-Nazi movements, according to the report.

"I think Ukrainians need to increasingly realize that these images undermine support for the country," Bellingcat investigative group researcher Michael Colborne is quoted as saying in the report.

Ukrainian leaders either do not understand or are unwilling to acknowledge how the symbols are viewed outside of Ukraine, Colborne said.

However, Jewish groups and anti-hate organizations have been largely reluctant to call out Ukraine's use of Nazi-associated symbols, with some leaders privately expressing concerns about being viewed as embracing Russian perspectives, the report said.

The Ukrainian government reportedly said that it "categorically condemns" any manifestations of Nazism.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has in part tied Russia's special military operation to the Ukrainian government's support of neo-Nazi factions, linked to the larger objective of protecting populations subjected to targeted violence by the regime in Kiev.

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Canada Emergency Preparedness Minister Informs of 413 Active Wildfires, 249 Out of Control

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) – There are 413 active wildfires burning across Canada at present, and 249 of them are out of control, Minister for Emergency Preparedness Bill Blair said on Monday.

"There are currently 413 wildfires, burning in 249 of those fires are deemed out of control," Blair said in a press conference where he also noted that since the beginning of the year there have been 2214 wildfires across the country, burning over 3.3 million hectares of land.

Blair further informed of 18 active wildfires directly affecting First Nation communities – six in Alberta, five in Saskatchewan, four in Quebec, two in Nova Scotia, and one in the Northwestern Territories.

Forced to evacuate due to the raging fires, 26,000 Canadians are currently displaced, Blair said, a reduction from 29,000 as announced on the wildfire update of June 2.

Blair thanked Australia, the United States, New Zealand, South Africa and France for the firefighters and assistance they have sent to Canada, adding that new international deployments from those countries can be expected in the coming days.

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Americans With Close Ties to Immigrants View Their Contributions More Positively - Poll

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - The proximity and interaction with immigrants by other Americans is a key factor in determining their views on a range and impact of immigrant related issues, such as crime, culture and labor issues, Morning Consult said in a new survey Monday.

"While the lion's share of adults say immigration to the United States is worsening the national outlook on the economy, crime, government benefits, taxes and the labor force, the picture is different among those who count an immigrant as a friend or family member," the pollster said.

"Among such Americans, a slim 51% majority say immigration has a positive impact on culture, as do pluralities on the economy (41%) and the labor force (45%)."

Morning Consult said views of immigration's influence on crime, government benefits and taxes move into the most negative category, which lessens among people who have personal relationships with iViews of immigration's impact on crime, government benefits and taxes skew the most negative, though less so among those who have personal relationships with immigrants.

Almost 3 in 5 Americans say immigration is making crime worse, including 49% of those with immigrant friends or family members, according to the findings.

Researchers said the trend extends across the political spectrum, including Democrats, Republicans and independents.

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SpaceX Falcon Launches Commercial Resupply Mission to Space Station - NASA

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - A SpaceX Falcon 9 booster successfully launched on schedule at 11:47 am Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) propelling an unmanned Dragon 9 cargo spacecraft on a mission to the International Space Station (ISS), NASA said on Monday.

"SpaceX's Dragon will deliver new science investigations, food, supplies, and equipment for the international crew, including the next pair of IROSAs (International Space Station Roll Out Solar Arrays)," NASA said in an official blog. "The solar panels, which roll out using stored kinetic energy, will expand the energy-production capabilities of the space station."

Each new IROSA will produce more than 20 kilowatts of electricity, and once all are installed, they will generate a 30% increase in power production over the station's current arrays, NASA said.

"Arrival at the station is scheduled for 5:50 am Tuesday. The SpaceX Dragon spacecraft will dock autonomously to the station's zenith port of the Harmony module," the blog said.

The 28th SpaceX commercial resupply services mission to the ISS carrying 7,000 pounds of supplies and scientific experiments to the ISS took off from Launch Complex 39A at the agency's Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

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Crypto Exchange Binance and Founder Charged With Illegal Routing of Customer Funds - SEC

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - The US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) said on Monday it has filed 13 charges against Binance, operator of the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange, and its co-founder Changpeng Zhao, for alleged commingling of user funds diverted to an European firm controlled by Zhao.

"Through thirteen charges, we allege that Zhao and Binance entities engaged in an extensive web of deception, conflicts of interest, lack of disclosure, and calculated evasion of the law," SEC Chair Gary Gensler said in a statement. "The complaint further alleges that the strategic and targeted wash trading largely perpetrated by the Binance US platform's primary undisclosed 'market making' trading firm Sigma Chain, also owned by Zhao, demonstrates the falsity of statements ... made about its market surveillance and controls."

Expounding details of the case, the SEC, which acts as the US stock market's regulator, said Zhao and Binance worked to subvert "their own controls" to allow high-net worth US investors and customers to continue trading on Binance's unregulated international exchange.

"They attempted to evade US securities laws by announcing sham controls that they disregarded behind the scenes so that they could keep high-value US customers on their platforms," the regulator said. "The public should beware of investing any of their hard-earned

assets with or on these unlawful platforms.”

Zhao, who lives in Dubai, dismissed the SEC’s charges on Twitter by saying “4,” a popular refrain in Binance’s community urging users to ignore fear, uncertainty, and doubt, or “FUD.”

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Trump Lawyers Meet With Justice Dept. Over Case Involving Classified Docs - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - The attorneys representing former president Donald Trump were at the Justice Department on Monday morning in an attempt to dissuade the government from charging Trump in connection with his alleged possession of classified documents, the Washington Post reported, citing people familiar with the matter.

The attorneys, including John Rowley and James Trusty, requested the meeting with Attorney General Merrick Garland in late May to discuss what Trump and his defense team have been calling unfair treatment by the appointed special counsel Jack Smith, the report said.

The meeting with Garland, as opposed to meeting with a Justice Department division chief, is notable because Garland, as Attorney General, has the authority to overrule the special counsel if he feels Smith has failed to follow Justice Department policies, said the report.

Special counsel Jack Smith was appointed to lead the classified documents case in November, when federal prosecutors started their investigation into whether Trump or his associates mishandled classified documents or obstructed efforts by the government to retrieve them.

Trump has denied any wrongdoing in the classified documents case and the other three criminal probes he is involved in, including charges of falsifying business records and the former president's alleged involvement in the events on Capitol Hill on January 6, 2021.

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AI Weaponization of Huge Concern, Governments Should Mitigate Risks – Guterres

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) – The weaponization of artificial intelligence (AI) causes a great concern and governments worldwide should come together to mitigate related risks, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Monday.

"The weaponization of AI is a huge concern," Guterres said at the Summit of the Future.

He urged governments to coordinate with each other to mitigate all possible risks and identify ways to benefit humanity.

Guterres pointed out that generative AI will have a huge impact on education, communication, and many other areas. However, he noted, the future of that impact is not clear.

"While AI has the potential to turbocharge development and productivity, accelerate progress, it also presents serious ethical challenges," Guterres added.

The UN chief expressed concern that technological progress now often inspires fear rather than

hope. Despite the challenges, the international community should advance AI development, according to Guterres.

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UPDATE- Guterres Says Reforms to IMF Quotas Needed, Boosting Representation of Developing Countries

(Updates with additional info in paras 4-8)

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Monday that reforms to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) quotas are needed and the representation of the developing nations in both the IMF and the World Bank should be expanded to address injustices and systemic bias in the international financial architecture.

"The brief proposes strengthening the voice and representation of developing countries in the boards of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund," Guterres said. "It proposes reforms to IMF quotas, which should be delinked from access to resources. It also suggests changes to IMF voting rights and decision-making rules."

Guterres made his comments in a speech on three Policy Briefs on the Common Agenda, which are part of a series of eleven initiatives being made amid the preparations for the SDG Summit and the Summit of the Future.

Guterres pointed out in the speech that the Bretton Woods system is supposed to serve the world, however, it does not represent it, and the COVID-19 pandemic were a stress test for this system, which largely failed.

"It did not fulfil its core mandate as a financial safety net," he explained. "It did not provide enough of the financing needed to support a recovery in developing countries, many of which are now in the throes of a deep financial crisis."

The UN Chief underscored that fifty-two developing countries are in, or near, debt distress, while debt relief remains at a standstill.

"The Common Framework for debt treatment is not working," he said. "Inflation and rising interest rates are adding to the unsustainable financial pressure on developing countries. Some governments are being forced to choose between making debt repayments, or defaulting in order to pay public sector workers – possibly ruining their credit rating for years to come."

"In the short term, the international community needs to take urgent steps under current arrangements to relieve the burden on developing and emerging economies," Guterres explained. "I have advocated for an SDG Stimulus to achieve this. But beyond emergency measures, we need a structural response. The international community must reform the international financial architecture, to make it resilient, equitable, and accessible to all."

Moreover, Guterres noted, this Policy Brief proposes a representative apex body to oversee the entire system.

Guterres went on to say that proposals on debt suggest the establishment of a Debt Workout Mechanism, possibly at a Multilateral Development Bank.

"This would link development financing with commercial creditors," he said. "A sovereign debt

authority – with the representation of developing countries – could develop and implement a framework for restructuring."

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Mike Pence Files Paperwork to Run for US President - Federal Election Commission Filing

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) – Former US Vice President Mike Pence on Monday submitted paperwork to run for US presidency in the 2024 election, according to a Federal Election Commission filing.

Senator Tim Scott from South Carolina and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis joined the Republican presidential competition in May. The Republican roster includes other popular figures, such as former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, ex-Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson, and multimillionaire Vivek Ramaswamy, while multiple polls show, former US President Donald Trump remains the leader of the Republican race.

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US Support for Ukraine Strains Country's Defense Industrial Base - Pentagon Policy Chief

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - The United States' billions of dollars in military aid for Ukraine has put a strain on the country's defense industrial base, US Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl said on Monday.

"The effort to assist the Ukrainians has put stress on our defense industrial base," Kahl said during an event at the NATO Youth Summit.

The US needs to act both unilaterally and collectively to address the issue, including securing congressional spending authorities and training a technical workforce, Kahl said.

The US is recognizing that the defense industrial base must be viewed as a "collective good of the free world," Kahl added, stressing the importance of pursuing interoperability between allied weapons systems.

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Govts Must Come Together to Reduce Risks Of Digital Technologies for Humanity- Guterres

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Monday that there is a critical need for the world's governments to come together in a Global Digital Compact, to reduce the risks of digital technologies for the humanity.

"There is an urgent need for governments to come together in a Global Digital Compact, to mitigate the risks of digital technologies, and identify ways to harness their benefits for the good of humanity," Guterres said. "My policy brief meets this need in three ways. First, it proposes a vision for digital cooperation that puts humanity at the core, with no one left behind."

Guterres went on to say that, secondly, the policy brief suggests how this can be achieved.

"The Global Digital Compact is a unique opportunity to bring together governments, regional organizations, the private sector and civil society in a global approach to digital governance," he explained. "National and regional approaches are simply not enough in our globalized world. The Compact would provide a framework to align national, regional and industry approaches around global priorities, principles and objectives."

Guterres went on to say that there is a need for bigger investment in building the capacities of public administrations.

"The brief offers concrete ideas on how companies that have profited from unfettered access to markets could invest in safeguards and accountability," he said. "It also proposes steps to address gaps in the governance of AI. The brief reiterates my intention, with your support, to establish a High-Level Advisory Body for AI."

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US Sanctions 7 People, 1 Entity for Alleged Russian Influence Effort in Moldova - Treasury

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - The United States sanctioned seven people and one entity tied to an alleged Russian influence campaign in Moldova earlier this year, the US Treasury Department said on Monday.

The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated seven leading members of a "malign influence group" linked to Russian intelligence services, as well as one related entity, for their alleged role in destabilization and influence campaigns in Moldova, the Treasury Department said in a statement.

"Russia's attempted influence operations exploit the concerns of the citizens of these countries, to destabilize legitimately elected governments for Moscow's own interests. The United States remains committed, along with the EU, to target individuals who engage in such activities against the government of Moldova," US Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian Nelson said in the statement.

The sanctioned actors are allegedly part of a broader global information operation by Russia that targets Ukraine, Moldova, Balkan countries, the European Union, the United Kingdom and the US, the statement said.

The so-called "malign influence operatives" allegedly analyze countries vulnerable to exploitation and stoke fears that undermine faith in democratic principles, the statement said.

The sanctioned actors allegedly plotted to capitalize on protests in Moldova in February and

March of this year, with the aim of manufacturing an insurrection against the Moldovan government, the statement said.

Sanctioned individuals include: Konstantin Sapozhnikov, the alleged leader of the group tasked with destabilizing the Moldovan government; Yury Makolov; Gleb Khloponin; Svetlana Boyko; Aleksey Losev; Vasily Gromovikov; and Anna Travnikova, according to the statement.

In addition, the US sanctioned Perko Julleuchter, a ceramic lantern production workshop owned by Losev, the statement said.

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Blinken Reiterates 'All Options on Table' to Ensure Iran Does Not Obtain Nuclear Arms

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - The United States is not ruling out any options to ensure that Iran does not obtain nuclear weapons if diplomacy is to fail, Secretary of State Antony Blinken reaffirmed on Monday in an address to a powerful pro-Israel lobbying group.

Blinken said the US still believes that the means of diplomacy are the best way to effectively and sustainably prevent Tehran from getting its hands on weapons of mass destruction.

"If Iran rejects the path of diplomacy, then, as President Biden has repeatedly made clear, all options are on the table to ensure that Iran does not obtain a nuclear weapon," Blinken told the 2023 American Israel Public Affairs Committee Policy summit.

The Secretary added that both the Democratic and Republican parties support the diplomatic and economic pressure on Iran, as well as the strengthening of Israeli military capabilities as a strong element of armed deterrence.

In addition, deepening Israel's relationship with its neighbors and advancing regional integration will also be critical to US and Israeli security, Blinken continued.

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Guterres Says Reforms to IMF Quotas Needed, Boosting Representation of Developing Countries

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Monday that reforms to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) quotas are needed and the representation of the developing nations in both the IMF and the World Bank should be expanded to address injustices and systemic bias in the international financial architecture.

"The brief proposes strengthening the voice and representation of developing countries in the boards of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund," Guterres said. "It proposes reforms to IMF quotas, which should be delinked from access to resources. It also suggests changes to IMF voting rights and decision-making rules."

Guterres made his comments in a speech on three Policy Briefs the Common Agenda, which

are part of a series of eleven being made amid the preparations for the SDG Summit and the Summit of the Future.

"In the short term, the international community needs to take urgent steps under current arrangements to relieve the burden on developing and emerging economies," Guterres explained. "I have advocated for an SDG Stimulus to achieve this. But beyond emergency measures, we need a structural response. The international community must reform the international financial architecture, to make it resilient, equitable, and accessible to all."

Moreover, Guterres noted, this Policy Brief proposes a representative apex body to oversee the entire system.

Guterres went on to say that proposals on debt suggest the establishment of a Debt Workout Mechanism, possibly at a Multilateral Development Bank.

"This would link development financing with commercial creditors," he said. "A sovereign debt authority – with the representation of developing countries – could develop and implement a framework for restructuring."

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US Has Real National Security Interest in Israeli-Saudi Normalization – Blinken

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) – The United States has a "real national security interest" in normalizing the relationship between Israel and Saudi Arabia, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Monday.

"The United States has a real national security interest in promoting normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia. We believe that we can, and indeed we must play a role in advancing that," Blinken said at the annual American Israel Public Affairs Committee Policy (AIPAC) summit.

Washington has no illusion that this can be done quickly or easily, he continued.

"But we remain committed to working toward this outcome, including on my trip this week to Jeddah and Riyadh," Blinken said.

Blinken noted that a more integrated and prosperous region serves the interest of Israel, regional states, and the United States.

Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said in May that Israel and Saudi Arabia have "the same interests" and would normalize relations. It's not a matter of if, but of when, he stated.

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UN Policy Brief Offers Proposals to Mitigate Risks, Use Opportunities of Space - Guterres

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Monday that a UN policy brief on outer space governance, which was released last week, outlines proposals

on reducing risks and harnessing the opportunities of space.

"Space assets already play a growing role in navigation, internet provision, and monitoring trends on earth, from energy and climate to biodiversity and a host of other vital functions. Nearly forty percent of SDG [Sustainable Development Goals] targets rely on data from space," Guterres said. "The policy brief provides you with proposals on mitigating the risks and harnessing the opportunities of space in the most inclusive way possible."

Guterres noted that while most of the people will never travel to space, and it is difficult to understand why one should care about it amid so much poverty and hunger on earth, dramatic advances in space would have "implications for us all."

Guterres made his remarks in a speech on three policy briefs of the UN's "Our Common Agenda," which are part of a series of 11 being made as part of the preparations for the SDG Summit and the Summit of the Future.

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US Targets 7 People, 1 Entity With New Russia-Related Sanctions - Treasury Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) - The United States is targeting seven people and one entity with new Russia-related sanctions, the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) said on Monday.

OFAC updated its specially designated nationals list to include seven Russian nationals, as well as the entity Perko Julleuchter, which is listed as a manufacturer of "other porcelain and ceramic products."

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Biden Admin. Working With Congress to Send \$37Mln in Cyber Aid to Ukraine – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Sputnik) – The Biden administration is working with Congress to send an additional \$37 million in cyber aid to Ukraine following another round of the US-Ukraine Cyber Dialogue that took place in Tallinn, Estonia earlier this month, the US State Department said on Monday.

"The United States and Ukraine met on June 1, 2023 in Tallinn, Estonia to re-convene the U.S.-Ukraine Cyber Dialogue, an annual discussion on cyber policy issues. During the dialogue, the United States delegation reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to support Ukraine's cyber defense in the face of Russia's unprovoked invasion. As part of this support, the United States is working with Congress to deliver an additional \$37 million in cyber assistance to Ukraine...", the State Department said in a press release.

The new assistance would bring the total amount of US cyber aid for Ukraine to \$82 million since February 2022, and to over \$120 million since 2016, the release added.

In May, the US Department of Defense issued its new 2023 cyber strategy and said that the document is partially informed by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and defines the ways in which the US military will act in cyberspace amid an increased number of threats.